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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. This fourteenth report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2191 (2014), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained in the report is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground and reports from open sources and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period 1 to 31 March 2015. More recent data have been included, when available.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of violence continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in March, particularly in the governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, Rif Dimashq, Damascus, Dar'a, Homs, Hama, Deir ez-Zor, Ladhiqiyah and Hasakeh. Indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, by Government forces and indiscriminate shelling by non-State armed groups and extremist and listed terrorist groups[1] continued, resulting in deaths, injuries, the destruction of homes and infrastructure and the displacement of civilians. Parties to the conflict continue to disregard international humanitarian law and their obligations to protect civilians.

[1] On 30 May 2013, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusra Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council under resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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4. Heavy fighting in the governorate of Idlib, including in Idlib City, led to dozens of deaths and injuries and displaced tens of thousands of people. After days of escalating fighting, the newly formed Jaysh al-Fatah, comprised of the Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham and six other non-State armed groups reportedly comprising more than 4,000 fighters, launched an offensive against Government and pro-government positions in and around Idlib city, taking control of the city at the end of March. Government and pro-government forces withdrew to positions south of the city and subsequently attacked the city with heavy shelling, including with surface-to-surface rockets and aerial attacks, including reportedly with barrel bombs. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Application Programme analysis of satellite imagery collected on 6 April 2015 found that, compared to images collected in February 2014, 350 structures were damaged, including more than 120 that were completely destroyed. Aerial bombardment of the city and the nearby villages of Sarmin, Mantaf and Nayrab between 29 and 31 March reportedly killed at least 49 civilians. Non-State armed groups engaged in fighting against the two largely Shia majority villages of Al Foh'a and Kafraya, where an estimated 20,000 people reside.

5. The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces alleged that Government forces used a chlorine agent during attacks in Idlib governorate in March, a claim denied by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

6. Fighting and shelling between Government forces and non-State armed groups inside Aleppo city continued. On 6 March, at least 20 civilians were allegedly killed as a result of barrel bombs dropped by Government helicopters on the neighbourhood of Qadi Askar in eastern Aleppo city. Indiscriminate mortar attacks by non-State armed groups led to dozens of civilian deaths and injuries. On 23 March, at least 13 civilians were killed and more than 30 injured as a result of indiscriminate attacks on the neighbourhood of Jamiliya.

7. Government forces continued the aerial bombardment of areas in Rif Dimashq, resulting in the reported killing and injuring of hundreds of civilians. For example, on 4 March, Government missiles struck a residential area in the heart of Deir al-Asafeer, in eastern Ghouta, reportedly killing six civilians and injuring at least 15 others. Attacks on 8 March had a significant impact on civilians in Erbin, when vacuum bombs were reportedly dropped on residential areas, killing at least 11 civilians and injuring more than 70. Air strikes near a primary school in Deir al-Asafeer on 10 March reportedly killed 2 civilians and injured 50 others, including children. The town of Douma was also affected by air strikes, with dozens of civilians killed. Air strikes on 14 and 15 March hit the residential neighbourhoods of Na'oura Garden and Masaken, reportedly killing 38 civilians and injuring at least 147 others. An air strike on a market in Harasta al-Qantara in eastern Ghouta on 27 March resulted in at least 30 injured. Civilians reportedly rushed out of a nearby mosque to tend to the injured, and a second air strike in the vicinity of the mosque reportedly killed 9 civilians and injured some 70 others.

8. Government attacks on Moadamiyet, where humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate, were also reported. Humanitarian assistance continued to be restricted, despite several requests being made by the United Nations to deliver aid; however, reports indicate that it was still possible for specific groups of residents, such as students and public servants, to enter and exit. Despite that, at the last Government checkpoint before civilians are allowed to re-enter Moadamiyet they

are reportedly prevented from carrying in bread or other food products. The food and medical situation is worsening at a time when the deaths of two children, with 10 more in critical condition, have been reported.

9. Non-State armed groups continued to fire mortars and rockets on Damascus city, hitting the areas of Bab Touma, Dwel'a, Al Kassa', Abou Rummaneh and Al Sha'la. On 8 and 11 March, non-State armed groups targeted several areas in Damascus with mortar rounds and Katyusha missiles, some of which hit Umawyeen Square in Damascus, injuring six civilians. On 30 March, several mortar rounds hit Harika neighbourhood and the area near Tishreen Military Hospital in Barza neighbourhood, with 2 civilians reported killed and at least 30 others injured.

10. Negotiations between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and Yarmouk camp delegations on a local agreement continued in March. Delegations were due to meet again on 2 April, but on 1 April, ISIL and the Nusra Front infiltrated the camp. Some 18,000 people, including 3,500 children, were trapped in Yarmouk when heavy fighting erupted between ISIL, the Nusra Front, non-State armed groups and Government forces, including aerial attacks and the reported use of barrel bombs. Dozens of civilians were reportedly killed and hundreds wounded. There were reports of abductions and executions carried out by ISIL fighters who claimed control of most of the area. Snipers were said to be active in the area. While it is still difficult to ascertain the number of people who have left the camp, thousands have fled Yarmouk for neighbouring communities. The absence of protection and the deteriorating humanitarian conditions are extremely worrying. There were already severe shortages of food, water and health supplies and the recent violence has exacerbated this situation.

11. Fighting continued in the south of the country, including in Dar'a governorate. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received information indicating that Dar'a al-Balad has been under heavy Government bombardment. On 26 March, Government jets bombed the city, while helicopters dropped bombs on the vicinity of a market, killing at least 25 civilians and injuring 45 others. Non-State armed groups reportedly launched more than 30 gas cylinders and rockets on Dar'a city, killing 4 people from the same family. Heavy fighting also broke out in Bosra al-Sham[2] on 21 March. According to reports, non-State armed groups seized full control of the town on 24 March. Sources state that the archaeological citadel and residential areas were hit with a number of explosive shells, leading to the destruction and burning of many traditional houses and markets, as well as the Bosra al-Sham hotel. On 1 April, non-State armed groups claimed control of the Naseeb border crossing with Jordan after fighting in and around the area. The border has been closed, halting the movement of civilians and goods, including humanitarian assistance.

12. Hostilities between Government forces and non-State armed groups continued in Homs. According to reports received, on 17 March a Government air strike on a populated neighbourhood killed 3 civilians and injured around 18 others. On the same day, non-State armed groups shelled the Zahra residential area, reportedly injuring at least nine civilians. Fighting in areas populated by civilians subsequently decreased in intensity, until 12 April, when multiple explosions resulted in civilian

[2] Bosra, which was once the capital of the Roman province of Arabia, was inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage list in 1980, and placed on the agency's World Heritage in Danger list in 2013.

casualties, reports of a school being partially destroyed and large-scale damage to houses.

13. In Waer, despite continued armed clashes, negotiations on a local agreement continued between the Waer committee and the Government delegation. The agreement presented to both sides, with implementation scheduled in three phases, fell through.

14. On 30 March, ISIL fighters entered the village of Mab'ouja — which has a mixed population of Sunnis, Alawites and Ismaili — east of Hama city, Hama governorate. According to reports received by OHCHR, at least 30 civilians were executed by ISIL. Government forces stationed in the adjacent village of Saboura reportedly retaliated by attacking ISIL positions with heavy weapons leading to an unspecified number of civilian deaths and injuries in addition to the destruction of a number of residential buildings. Reports have been received that some 4,000 people fled Mab'ouja for Saboura and Salamiyeh, some of whom have subsequently returned.

15. In the Deir ez-Zor governorate, Government aerial bombardment of the ISIL-controlled city of Mayadin struck a residential home on 6 March, reportedly killing at least five members of a family.

16. Non-State armed groups, particularly Jaish al-Islam, continued to attack Government positions and areas populated by civilians in Ladhiqiyah governorate, using homemade rockets.

17. The use of improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices continued. On 20 March, at least 45 civilians were killed and 70 injured in Hasakeh city when two car bombs targeted people celebrating Nowruz. A statement attributed to ISIL was posted on the Internet the same day, claiming responsibility for the detonation. On 10 March, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated in the town of Tal, in eastern Ghouta, reportedly killing 1 civilian and injuring 25 others. The attack also destroyed four residential apartments. On 30 March, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated in a market in the area of Jiza in rural Dar`a, held by a non-State armed group, leading to the explosion of a gasoline store where the vehicle was parked, killing at least 13 civilians, including 6 children, and critically injuring around 50. The perpetrators of those attacks remain unknown.

18. Civilian infrastructure continued to be targeted, and basic services, including electricity and water, continued to be cut. For example, the National Defense Force continued to cut off water supply to some 45,000 people in areas between Homs and Hama that are controlled by non-State armed groups opposed to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. On 24 March, ISIL deactivated the Tayem power plant, cutting electricity to the 228,000 people living in besieged neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city. As a result, water supply has been dramatically reduced. Schools have also been attacked. On 5 March, one teacher and two children were killed in an attack in the town of Kanafez in Hama governorate. On the same day, a school in Beret Armnaz village in Idlib governorate was damaged, with one teacher and six students killed and three students injured.

19. ISIL has allegedly continued its trend of child recruitment, including enlisting them in the so-called Ashbal al-Khilafa (Cubs of the Caliphate). Recruitment offices

are said to have opened in Mayadin and Bokamal for the purpose of motivating young recruits before they undergo military courses and training.

20. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by fighting. Multiple sources estimate that at least 77,000 people have been displaced by fighting in Idlib governorate. Another 75,000 people were displaced in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates. Some 12,500 people were reported to have moved from Hole city to Hasakeh city because of fears of an escalation of fighting between the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) and ISIL and another 3,800 people have fled to Hasakeh city and Ras al-Ein due to fighting between the groups north of Tal Tamer. Fighting between the same groups in Aleppo forced some 7,000 people to flee Lower Shyukh town, approximately 20 kilometres from Ain al-Arab, and surrounding villages to Menbif and Aleppo city. Around 1,500 people have been relocated from eastern Ghouta to the Dahiet Qudsaiya collective shelter in Rif Dimashq, bringing the number to approximately 12,500 since January.

21. Non-State armed group alliances and formulations are in flux with new groups being formed and others disbanding. Recently, and mainly in the northern part of the country, a group of Free Syrian Army brigades and battalions in Idlib, Hama and Ladhiqiyah countryside announced the formation of the Revolution Protectors Group (Tajamou'a Homat al-Thawra). Twelve other non-State armed groups in Hama and Idlib governorates formed Jabhat al-Sham. Suqour al-Sham has merged with Ahrar al-Sham. In eastern Ghouta, officers who defected from the Syrian armed forces established the Military Council for Damascus and Rif Dimashq and joined a unified military command in eastern Ghouta. Kata'ib Ahl al-Sham in Rif Dimashq (previously part of Ajnad al-Sham) announced its merger with Al Rahman Corps.

22. On 6 March, Jaish al-Islam allegedly negotiated a ceasefire between the Nusra Front and Liwa Sham al-Rasoul, a local non-State armed group, in Beit Sahem in Damascus, after two days of fighting between the two groups. The fighting was believed to have begun after civilians demanded that the Nusra Front evacuate its positions in the area. Four civilians died and six were injured when the Nusra Front fired on protestors in front of its headquarters. The Nusra Front later evacuated the area.

23. The presence of fighters with sectarian insignias was visible at different checkpoints in the Syrian Arab Republic. In Damascus, the Zeinab Battalions announced the formation of a new battalion as a response to the Zeinab shrine bombing on 23 February, reportedly aimed at conducting military operations, including suicide missions. Allegedly non-State armed groups either killed or captured a number of Hizbullah, Caucasian and Iranian fighters in Aleppo and Dar'a.

24. According to data released by United States Central Command on 6 April, the international anti-ISIL coalition has conducted 1,333 air strikes in the Syrian Arab Republic since September 2014. While the large majority of those killed in these strikes were fighters from ISIL or the Nusra Front, monitoring groups have also reported civilian casualties resulting from these strikes. For example, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights states that 70 out of the 1,953 deaths it has documented during the campaign were civilians. On 6 January, United States Central Command announced that it had opened investigations into 18 separate allegations of coalition air strikes resulting in civilian casualties in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic between 8 August and 30 December 2014. It added that it had

determined that 13 cases were not credible and 5 remained under investigation, including 2 from late December 2014, which were said to be credible.

25. The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria remains committed to pursuing opportunities to achieve a reduction of violence. Consultations with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and with representatives of the opposition on the implementation of the Aleppo freeze initiative are currently inconclusive. The proposed freeze constitutes a straightforward effort to save lives and to respond to the desire of many Syrians for a respite from the fighting.

B. Human rights

26. OHCHR continued to receive allegations and document cases of arbitrary detention, torture and death in custody inside Government detention centres run by Syrian security forces mostly in Damascus, but also in Hama and Homs. Allegations were received noting systematic torture, including by electric shock, beatings with metal sticks, forced positions for prolonged hours and inhuman detention conditions in Al Khatib State Security Branch (Damascus), the Criminal Security Branch (Damascus), the Harasta Air Force Intelligence (Damascus), Military Intelligence Branch 291 (Damascus), the Air Force Intelligence Branch (Homs) and the Political Security Branch (Idlib). Allegations of death in detention as a result of torture were also received from a number of detention centres, including Mezzeh Air Force Intelligence Branch (Damascus), Al Fayhaa Political Security Branch (Damascus), Military Intelligence Branch 215 (Damascus) and a detention centre run by the National Defence Forces in Hama. According to information received by OHCHR, Syrian Government personnel fleeing Idlib reportedly executed at least 15 detainees held at the Military Intelligence Branch.

27. Following the public release of thousands of photos of detainees who allegedly died in Syrian Government detention centres, OHCHR sources reported that over 600 families have identified their dead relatives, the majority of whom had been detained since 2012 and 2013 by various Syrian Government security branches.

28. On 24 March 2015, the Government reportedly released approximately 700 inmates who were detained at different security branches in Damascus.

29. ISIL continued to execute civilians. For example, on 10 March in rural Aleppo, ISIL reportedly publicly beheaded a man for "witchcraft". In the eastern part of Homs governorate, ISIL executed and beheaded five men near Sokhna town on 21 March, reportedly for spying for the Government. Another man was executed for allegedly "insulting God". On 27 March, ISIL beheaded three men in the village of Hanota, who were reportedly sentenced by a self-proclaimed court for the possession of unpermitted weapons.

30. In Raqqa governorate, ISIL continued to carry out executions and other punishment for alleged violations of codes based on its own strict interpretation of Islamic law. On 2 March, ISIL fighters reportedly threw a man off a building and then stoned him to death in the city of Tabaqqa allegedly on the basis of his sexual orientation. On 6 March, ISIL fighters reportedly executed two civilians in the city of Raqqa on the pretext of "collaborating with the Government". OHCHR is not aware if any form of judicial process took place prior to the execution.

C. Humanitarian access

31. Some 12.2 million people require humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic. About 7.6 million people are internally displaced, and more than 3.9 million people have fled the Syrian Arab Republic to neighbouring countries and North Africa.

32. Despite the continued efforts of United Nations agencies and their partners, the delivery of humanitarian assistance remained extremely challenging. A combination of factors continued to impede access in some areas, including insecurity and shifting conflict lines, deliberate interference, restrictions on access and onerous administrative procedures that constrain the effective delivery of assistance.

33. For the tenth month in a row, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was unable to send water treatment materials to Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa governorates owing to the difficulty of delivering humanitarian supplies through areas controlled by ISIL. WFP continued to halt deliveries to areas controlled by ISIL, affecting some 700,000 people in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakeh and Aleppo governorates.

34. No major changes in the administrative procedures required by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were reported in March. Those procedures continued to delay or limit the delivery of assistance. A recent expansion of the Government's "hazardous items" list resulted in delays in approvals for the importation of water treatment materials during March. On 11 March, United Nations agencies and partners with warehouses in Tartous were informed by the Syrian authorities that facilitation letters to transport aid supplies to Idlib would be provided so long as the deliveries were destined only for Idlib city, which is controlled by the Government. That resulted in significant delays transporting much needed supplies into the governorate. There were also delays in approval or non-response from the Government to requests to access various locations, including hard-to-reach areas of Dar`a, Aleppo, Hasakeh, Rif Dimashq, Idlib, Hama and Homs governorates.

35. On 9 March, the Governor of Homs sent a letter indicating that United Nations agencies working in the health sector could liaise with national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) only through the governorate health department. On 24 March the Governor clarified that United Nations agencies needed to coordinate with the Ministry of Health, and should not halt direct communication with the national NGOs. On 19 March, the Governor of Hasakeh reversed a decision to change the areas of coverage for World Food Programme (WFP) implementing partners after concerns were raised by WFP and partners about the possible negative impact of the decision on food distribution.

36. The United Nations continued to face challenges with visas for international staff members. As at 5 April 2015, a total of 317 visa applications (requests for new visas or visa renewals) for United Nations staff had been submitted since 1 January 2015; 229 visas had been approved; and 22 visas had been rejected, including 6 since 15 March. In comparison, a total of 28 visas were rejected in 2014. As at 5 April, 66 visa requests remained pending: 30 within the limit of 15 working days and 36 exceeding the limit.

37. The 16 Government-approved international NGOs continued to face a series of administrative hurdles and restrictions that impact their ability to operate. International NGOs remain restricted in their ability to partner with national humanitarian organizations, open sub-offices, conduct missions, join inter-agency

convoys and conduct independent needs assessments. However, progress was recorded in March with regard to the visa status of international NGO staff members with the 10 pending visa applications approved during the month. Four additional visa requests were submitted in the last week of March and remain pending.

38. The number of national NGOs authorized by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to partner with United Nations agencies increased during the reporting period. In March, two new national NGOs were added to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs list of authorized national NGOs: one in Homs governorate and one in Damascus governorate. As at 31 March, 116 authorized national NGOs are operating through 174 branches. Authorized national NGOs continue to operate under complex procedures in partnering with United Nations agencies.

39. The level of funding for humanitarian activities continued to be outpaced by the scale of needs. The 2015 Syria Response Plan was 16 per cent funded as at 14 April. Some $3.6 billion were pledged for humanitarian activities in the Syrian Arab Republic and in the region at a conference hosted by the Amir and the Government of Kuwait on 31 March.

40. The combination of these factors continues to make the delivery of assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic ever more challenging. The delivery of assistance to the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas continued to be particularly difficult. During March, United Nations agencies and partners reached over 226,000 people with food in hard-to-reach locations; almost 60,000 with core relief items; almost 113,000 with health supplies; almost 395,000 with water, sanitation and hygiene supplies; and almost 12,000 with education supplies.

41. Two inter-agency cross-line convoys to hard-to-reach locations took place in March. On 3 March, teams reached Talbiseh in Homs governorate, completing the planned delivery of aid to 60,000 people. On 26 March, the first part of a convoy reached Rastan, Homs governorate, providing assistance for 33,250 people. During the passage of the convoy, members of the team were temporarily detained by a non-State armed group. They were subsequently released and escorted to safety. The other two parts of the convoy to Rastan were put on hold owing to the security situation in the area. That meant that the remaining 48,150 individuals, who were scheduled to receive assistance, received nothing.

42. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic convened a Joint Committee meeting on 9 April to discuss access to "hot spot areas"[3] and the 33 locations requested by the United Nations for inter-agency convoys since December. The Joint Committee approved convoys to 16 locations, 8 of which were on the list of 33 locations requested by the United Nations for inter-agency convoys. It was agreed that 3 of the 33 locations in Aleppo and Rif Dimashq are currently not accessible owing to the deteriorating security situation, including changing front lines. The requests to access these locations will be reactivated as soon as the situation permits. In the meeting, United Nations representatives sought approval of all outstanding requests and for more systematic and longer periods of access in order to respond to growing needs and monitor delivery.

[3] The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic refers to "hot spots". Clarification was requested by the United Nations on 16 July 2014 for the definition and criteria of "hot spots" but has not been received. For the purpose of the present report, they are referred to as hard-to-reach areas until clarified because of the difficulty in reaching these locations.

43. Despite the extremely difficult operating environment, the United Nations and partners continued to reach millions of people in need in March from within the country and across borders pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). WFP delivered food assistance for nearly 4.1 million people in 12 of the 14 governorates. WHO distributed medicines and supplies for 3.4 million treatments in 10 governorates. UNICEF provided multisectoral assistance for over 1.1 million people in eight governorates. In addition, deliveries of chlorine provided some 15.6 million people with access to safe water. UNHCR reached approximately 320,000 people with core relief items and protection services in 11 governorates. The International Organization for Migration reached over 255,000 people with multisectoral assistance in 11 governorates. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported 32,000 people with agricultural support in four governorates. The United Nations Population Fund supported its partners to deliver reproductive health and gender-based violence services to 57,000 women in eight governorates. UNRWA continues to provide support to up to 480,000 Palestine refugees on a monthly basis.

44. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). As at 12 April, the United Nations and its partners had sent 97 shipments to the Syrian Arab Republic: 67 from Turkey and 30 from Jordan. The shipments included food assistance for almost 1.9 million people; non-food items for around 1.2 million people; water and sanitation supplies for over 430,000 people; and medical supplies and treatments for over 930,000 people. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of each shipment, including details of content, destination district and number of beneficiaries. The United Nations monitoring mechanism continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. Its operations in Iraq remain pending owing to continued insecurity. The mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

45. United Nations agencies continued to use the Nusaybin/Qamishli crossing with the consent of the Governments of Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic. WFP transported 46,000 food rations through the border in March. However, owing to delays at the crossing and to transport approvals, WFP dispatched only 30,000 food rations during March, including 5,700 rations in areas under the control of non-State armed groups in the governorate. UNICEF also received approval in March to import water, sanitation and hygiene and non-food items through the Nusaybin/Qamishli crossing, with the first shipments completed in early April.

46. Both international and Syrian NGOs continued to deliver multisector assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic in March, including through the provision of ongoing services. NGOs reached nearly 1.6 million people during the month, including aid delivery to nearly 785,000 people in Aleppo, over 286,000 in Dar`a and more than 280,000 people in Idlib. However, the escalating conflict in Idlib hampered programme operations.

Besieged areas

47. Of the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas, some 440,000 people remain besieged in the Syrian Arab Republic. This includes 167,500 people besieged by Government forces in eastern Ghouta and Darayya; 26,500 people besieged by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahra; 228,000 people besieged by ISIL in the

Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city; and 18,000 people besieged in Yarmouk.

48. The parties to the conflict continued to restrict access to besieged areas during March. United Nations agencies reached a total of 18,000 people (4 per cent) with food assistance and 1,198 people (0.3 per cent) with health assistance. No core relief items were dispatched during the reporting period.

49. In eastern Ghouta, some 163,500 people remain besieged by Government forces. No United Nations assistance reached eastern Ghouta during March, with the exception of a limited amount of water support to 300 people in Harasta. The last United Nations assistance to reach eastern Ghouta was in January 2015.

50. In Darayya, Rif Dimashq, about 4,000 people remain besieged by Government forces. No United Nations assistance reached Darayya during March. People in the area have not been assisted by the United Nations since October 2012.

51. In Yarmouk, about 18,000 people were besieged. The conditions inside the camp worsened following the ISIL attacks. There are further shortages of food, water and medical supplies compounding the already dire situation. On 5 March, Syrian authorities granted the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) permission to distribute food parcels to civilians in Yarmouk after a break of nearly three months. Through a new distribution point established to the east of Yarmouk, UNRWA distributed a food parcel sufficient for approximately 10 days to almost 18,000 people in the month of March. The food deliveries were accompanied by WFP-supplied nutritional supplies for 1,197 children. Some 1,198 people were also offered a basic medical consultation. With UNRWA support, approximately 1,512 children also continue to receive informal primary education lessons in Yarmouk. UNRWA has been unable to access Yarmouk since 28 March, following the severe escalation of fighting inside the camp area. UNRWA has provided assistance to people who have managed to flee Yarmouk to the neighbouring areas of Tadamoun and Yalda. Those civilians who remain must be protected and must have access to assistance.

52. In Nubul and Zahra, about 26,500 people remain besieged by opposition forces. No United Nations assistance reached the two areas during March. United Nations agencies have not been able to deliver humanitarian assistance to the villages since 8 May 2014.

53. In the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city, some 228,000 people are besieged by ISIL. Through FAO partners, 140 sheep were delivered. No other United Nations assistance reached the area in March. People in Deir ez-Zor city were last reached by the United Nations in May 2014, although other humanitarian and commercial goods reached the city prior to the siege. Access to food is a serious concern as the pre-existing food supplies dwindle and the prices rise.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

54. During March, WHO and its implementing partners dispatched medicines and medical supplies for nearly 3.4 million treatments[4] to local health authorities, NGOs

[4] One standard treatment course is considered as treatment for one person. Treatment courses are determined for each medicine distribution on the basis of international WHO standard.

and private medical facilities in 10 governorates from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Approximately 100,000 treatments were delivered through cross-line deliveries in Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, Homs and Rif Dimashq governorates. This included the cross-line mission, led by UNHCR, to eastern Aleppo city using the Bustan al-Qasr crossing. Following a negotiated six-hour humanitarian ceasefire, medical supplies for 5,000 people were delivered by pull-cart to a hospital in Bustan al-Qasr. United Nations agencies working in the health sector provided medical supplies and treatments through cross-border operations for more than 60,000 people in March, including surgical kits.

55. Access to medical supplies and equipment continued to be restricted by insecurity and constraints imposed on humanitarian operations by parties to the conflict. For example, WHO has supplies in warehouses in Aleppo ready to be delivered to Nubul and Zahra, but ongoing fighting did not allow access. In total, nine WHO requests to deliver assistance to various locations in Aleppo, Dar`a, Rif Dimashq, Idlib, Hasakeh and Deir ez-Zor governorates have gone unanswered, including three submitted during the reporting period. In addition, despite receiving the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WHO shipments of medical assistance to the besieged town of Douma, in eastern Ghouta, and Madaya, in Rif Dimashq, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, remain pending with the Ministry of Health.

56. The second national polio immunization campaign in 2015 was carried out from 22 to 26 March, by the Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF and WHO, targeting some 2.9 million children under the age of five. Preliminary results revealed that the campaign reached over 2 million children under the age of five in 12 governorates. The vaccination campaign could not be implemented in Raqqa governorate, as ISIL did not permit vaccinations at health centres and mobile teams to proceed. Low coverage rates were also recorded in Deir ez-Zor owing to restrictions imposed by ISIL. Fighting in Idlib also inhibited the vaccination campaign. Some 682,000 children could not be vaccinated in the three governorates as a result. A separate cross-border vaccination campaign was organized from southern Turkey targeting children under the age of five. Some 1.3 million children under the age of five were vaccinated for polio in eight governorates.

57. Attacks on medical facilities, ambulances and medical personnel continued during the reporting period. In March, Physicians for Human Rights documented nine attacks on medical facilities. Eight were by Government forces and one by international coalition forces. Three attacks occurred in Idlib, two in Dar`a, two in Deir ez-Zor and two in Hama governorates. Five attacks were with missiles and rockets and four with barrel bombs. Physicians for Human Rights also documented the deaths of five medical personnel, two of whom were targeted or killed. Two personnel were tortured to death by Government forces and three were shot by unknown forces. Two deaths were in Damascus, and one each in Rif Dimashq and Aleppo governorates.

Safety and security of staff and premises

58. On 2 April, two Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers were killed in two separate incidents while on duty in Idlib governorate. Four other Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers were injured in one of the incidents.

59. Five Palestinian Red Crescent Society staff members were injured when the Palestine Hospital in Yarmouk was hit by mortar shells on 1 April.

60. On 30 March, a Palestinian Red Crescent Society staff member was shot and killed by unidentified assailants while on his way to perform his duties at the Palestine Hospital in Yarmouk camp.

61. On 26 March, a team of United Nations staff members and Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers were temporarily detained by a non-State armed group during an inter-agency convoy to Rastan city in Homs governorate. All participants were subsequently released and escorted to safety.

62. On 26 March, the office of a UNHCR NGO partner was hit by a rocket, causing structural damage in the Shmal al-Khat neighbourhood of Dar'a city. No injuries were reported. As a result of the attack, the distribution of UNHCR core relief items to 2,500 individuals could not take place.

63. On 23 March, an UNRWA vehicle sustained damage as a result of mortar fire in the al- Jamiliya area of Aleppo.

64. Clashes in the vicinity of the distribution point at Yarmouk camp were reported several times during the reporting period. On 19 March, the distribution of humanitarian assistance in the camp was disrupted when a civilian was seriously wounded while approaching the distribution area. She later died from her injuries.

65. On 8 March the roof of the refugee waiting area in the UNHCR Qamishli field office was hit by gunfire, with a bullet landing close to a group of refugees. No injuries were reported.

66. A total of 30 United Nations staff members, 26 of whom are UNRWA staff, continue to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 73. That included 17 staff members of the United Nations, 42 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and 6 staff members of international NGOs. Of the 73, 6 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

67. The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to deteriorate rapidly. Day after day we see more men, women and children killed, with the parties to the conflict failing to uphold the most basic tenets of international law. Instead of reducing, the violence has escalated in many parts of the country.

68. The disastrous effect of the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas continued to devastate large parts of the country. Innocent people were killed and maimed, some deliberately, and forced to flee as a result of the use of heavy weaponry in populated areas. All parties to the conflict must realize the toll this conflict continues to take on ordinary civilians. Yet they persist. Their actions raise serious moral and legal questions, which the international community, including the Security Council, must address. Those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable.

69. I again remind the parties to the conflict that the perpetration of violations by one does not exempt others from their obligations to protect civilians. These are

basic, minimum, international legal standards that must be upheld irrespective of the conduct of others. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, as a government, has a particular responsibility in this regard. Direct attacks against civilians in retaliation for another party's unlawful actions are strictly prohibited and constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law.

70. I am also appalled at the collective punishment being meted out to people in the Syrian Arab Republic. People are being purposefully denied water, electricity and basic services. The tightening of siege tactics continues to inflict wanton suffering. It is abhorrent and must be ended.

71. I would like to make a special plea to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for protection and assistance to the especially vulnerable Palestinian refugee population in the Yarmouk camp in Damascus. Caught between the Syrian armed forces and the worst of the extremist groups, they have little way out — and aid can find little way in. Their suffering has been largely out of the spotlight. In a single lifetime, many have suffered displacement twice. Since the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic began, their plight has been particularly acute.

72. Despite the significant challenges, humanitarian actors — themselves often at grave risk — continue to deliver aid to millions of people in need. I salute their courage and selflessness in the service of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic. As needs continue to grow, it is all the more urgent that their work is facilitated. They must be allowed to get on with the job of saving lives. Delays, obstruction and interference with their work is wholly unacceptable. Attacks on aid workers are prohibited under international humanitarian law and can constitute a war crime.

73. I am grateful for the generosity that Governments and people from around the world have shown, in particular through the pledging conference hosted by the Amir of Kuwait on 31 March. It is crucial that the pledges made be urgently disbursed to humanitarian organizations working on the ground so that the basic aid upon which millions of Syrians inside their country and those who have sought refuge outside the country depend can be delivered without interruption.

74. On 12 March I marked the fourth anniversary of the Syrian conflict by calling upon the international community to fulfil its collective responsibility to the Syrian people. Ordinary Syrians feel increasingly alone, as they and their neighbours continue to suffer under the eyes of an international community that is divided. Speaking at the League of Arab States summit at the end of March, I expressed anger and shame at the situation and asked my Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, to intensify the United Nations political efforts to end the conflict. Specifically, I asked him to consult widely with Security Council members and throughout the region, including with the Syrian parties themselves, on how to operationalize and flesh out the core elements of the Geneva communiqué.

75. I count on your full and urgent support to this effort as a step towards forging an inclusive, Syrian-led political transition based on the Geneva communiqué, which meets the aspirations of the Syrian people for freedom, dignity and justice. It is also incumbent upon the Syrian parties themselves, especially President Bashar al-Assad, to take decisive steps to end the bloodshed and to start a political process. Governments or movements that aspire to legitimacy do not massacre their own people.